



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 94TH REGIONAL READINESS COMMAND
11 SARATOGA BLVD
AYER, MASSACHUSETTS 01432-5216

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

May 28, 2004

JUN 13 2004

Office of the Deputy Commanding General

The Honorable James P. McGovern
2262 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0703

Dear Mr. McGovern:

Thank you for your letter dated May 7, 2004, concerning the 94th Military Police Company, the 912th Forward Surgical Team, and the 439th Quartermaster Company. I appreciate your concern and support to the Soldiers and family members of the 94th Regional Readiness Command (RRC).

During times of deployment and mobilization there exists an inordinate amount of stress and anxiety that reaches every aspect of the lives of Army Reserve Soldiers and their family members. The 94th RRC Chain of Command, at every level, shares your desire to inform, comfort, and assist. You may be assured that Soldier and Family Readiness is of the highest priority throughout this command. The 94th RRC supports Family Readiness as an ongoing process in which we strive for excellence.

A major challenge in this endeavor involves the recent decision to extend Soldiers in theater. Many family members are extremely upset with the decision. Family members want to know why this action took place, why their Soldiers were selected, and when will they come home. Unfortunately, these questions cannot be answered at the RRC level.

Responses to the seven major questions and concerns that you identified in your letter are addressed below:

Item 1: Reserve families often do not have access to the same facilities - from commissaries to mental health services - because they live far from the home installation. Similarly, the expectations that families have for deployed Reservists are far different from those of the active duty members.

Response: Unlike the Active Component (AC), the Army Reserve is not mandated as to where family members will live. The nature of reserve duty allows for family members to voluntarily select where they live. The closest facility to the 94th RRC

Headquarters for commissary and exchange services is Hanscom Air Force Base, in Bedford, MA. Due to the downsizing of the military, the closest Army facilities are presently located at Fort Dix, New Jersey. The Family Readiness Groups (FRG) are encouraged to car pool for shopping trips whenever possible. Mental health facilities may be located by calling the Army One Source (AOS) toll free number, available 24/7. Referrals for new or existing family plans and services include a wealth of information to assist the families in satisfying their needs. Family Readiness assistance at the unit level, as well as the 94th RRC level, is readily available.

Item 2: The Army has done a poor job of explaining the need for continued deployment of these companies, and has not adequately explained the details of the extension, such as length an the tasks that will be performed...we are anxious to hear your plans to improve communication.

Response: The 94th RRC is in full agreement that communications need to improve. When Army Reserve Soldiers are called to active duty, the RC no longer has command and control of these Soldiers. All information, decisions, and actions concerning deployed Soldiers are determined by the command in the theater of operation, (in this case, U.S. Central Command). There is little that this command can do to answer specific questions concerning events in theater. The components of the 94th RRC meet with the family members of deployed units on a regular basis. Family members often receive cell phone calls and e-mails from their Soldiers in Iraq on a daily basis. These communications contain a great deal of information, but the Army Reserve Command, including the 94th RRC, is unable to substantiate the information that is received. The credibility of the Army Reserve Command is challenged when the family members request the facts, but no official information has been made available to the RRC Commander. The end result is that the family members are quite often more informed than the Command because of the formal command communication channels through which the official information must be processed.

Item 3: 94th Readiness Command's website is completely insufficient in all respects.

Response: We agree that the 94th RRC website is insufficient. We will work to improve the website and get it to standard within 60 days or shut it down.

Item 4: Family Support services at the units at the reserve centers are insufficient. Most family members at the New Haven Reserve Center were unaware that family support staff was available until the meeting on April 26. Will you be taking steps to increase the responsiveness at reserve centers that comprise the 94th RRC?

Response: Yes. Presently, we have Ms. Tonya Lewis, a full time Senior Volunteer Resource Instructor, assigned to the New Haven Center. Ms. Lewis is assisting the Family Readiness Group (FRG) in restructuring and training new group members. FRG meetings will continue to be scheduled on a regular basis. Many of the FRGs choose not to meet in the reserve centers, but prefer to meet in private homes, parks, or public facilities. This is

left to the discretion of the individual group; therefore we will be monitoring responsiveness in all areas, inclusive of the reserve centers. In fairness to the Family Readiness Program, it should be pointed out that many of the attendees of the April 26th meeting in New Haven were individuals who chose, initially, not to be involved in the FRG process. As a result of the unit extensions, they came forward for the first time, stating that they had not been a part of the group. It is often very difficult to start and maintain a group when people feel that there is no need. In this case, when the decision to extend the units was announced, people (extended family, friends, loved ones, community members) come from all geographical locations for information. The 94th RRC Family Readiness Program has addressed families at every opportunity throughout the alert-mobilization-deployment-redeployment stages, asking them to be an active force in the process. As noted earlier in this letter, Reserve families do not have a military installation on which to reside. It is for this reason that the 94th RRC actively pursues strong FRGs to serve as the equivalent of a military installation, offering mutual support. The 94th RRC will continue to strive for excellence in maintaining this standard.

Item 5: Most families are unaware of "Operation Uplink" and other programs that provide free or reduced-rate calling cards to service members. We are also concerned that similar conditions may exist for other worthwhile programs such as "Operation Hero Miles." What are you doing to ensure RC dependents are aware of these and similar resources that can save money for these families?

Response: The Family Readiness Office receives as many as 200 new links per week from a great variety of sources. These are screened and added to the monthly top 100 listings and are sent for publication in the unit newsletters or on the FRG websites. Operation Uplink and Operation Hero Miles were included in the listing. Many such lists are available through a great many sources such as Army One Source, Twice the Citizen, Army Knowledge Online, USARC FLO Notes, and command newsletters. Family members are encouraged to use 'keywords' on their search engine to find a great many money saving, time saving, and informational messages. Family Readiness is also capable of directing family members to locations where they may use a computer or receive computer assistance when in need of information. Hard copies of this information are also available upon request.

Item 6: Will leave be granted to members of the 94th RRCs companies and battalions for reasons other than emergency?

Response: Command and control of deployed Soldiers for purposes of the various types of leave is under the control of the unit commander, and his chain of command in theater. The 94th RRC does not control leave authorizations for deployed Soldiers.

Item 7: What psychiatric services will be available to service members and their families when troops return?

Response: The 94th RRC has made the 883rd Combat Stress Unit, the 94th Chaplaincy, and the Family Readiness Program resources available to Soldiers and family

members. Family and marital communication classes and seminars, Information, Referral, and Follow-Up (IRF), Reunification Training (Family), Decompression Training (Soldier), and other similar programs are available. Many community members have come forward to provide social work services, counseling, and therapeutic stress therapy, upon request. The Army One Source is very proactive in assisting callers in finding and acquiring personal services, both free and paid. Family Readiness Group members also provide a psychological advantage to family members who need a non-professional mentor to discuss personal issues. The 94th RRC continues to assist returning Soldiers and their family members.

Our Army Reserve Family Groups and Group Leaders have served with honor, courage, and commitment, as have our Soldiers. We understand the situation and the sacrifices that the family members are making. We will continue to address their needs, and the needs of our Soldiers with every available resource.

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact Colonel Natalie Jacaruso, at the 94th RRC Headquarters at (978) 784-3779 or (cell) (978) 549-0888.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bruce E. Zukauskas", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Bruce E. Zukauskas
Brigadier General, U.S. Army Reserve
Deputy Commanding General